

Special Presentation

The present issue approaches the relations between violence and health. Violence, as a form of conflict resolution not only in broader social relations but also in the scope of interpersonal and intersubjective relations, is not a recent phenomenon in the contemporary Brazilian society, as one may think at first sight. Since the colonial period, narratives updated by the collective memory of “immemorial times” suggest the extent to which violence has been embedded in the daily social relations. Cruelty and brutality seemed to be characteristic of the colonial world. Classic studies in political sociology show the persistence of violent adjustments in the national independent society under the Empire. They were associated with trivial occurrences, typical of the common life in neighborhood relations, cooperation relations and also in kinship relations. They even reached playing activities and those complex operations of the collective mental imagery that are capable of producing the codification of culture’s fundamental values. Republican life has also not contributed to make them become sporadic or exceptional.

Despite the historical roots, violence in the contemporary Brazilian society translates a new social perception. Approximately four decades ago, violence was still confined to the world of private relations, referring to conjugal and domestic relations, to the way children and adolescents were treated at school and in correctional institutions, to the masculinity models that circulated as moral rules among male youths, to the indiscriminate repression against crime suspects. Deep changes in the Brazilian society that have been occurring since that time have brought

violence, its modalities and forms, its victims and possible authors to the public scene, raising the need for social and legal control policies, founded on scientific knowledge. Studies have multiplied both in the field of social sciences and in the field of health. There is now a generalized understanding according to which violence is not only a problem of law enforcement and human rights preservation, but also a problem concerning prevention and public health promotion.

The present issue offers contributions that try to establish dialogs between the social sciences and health in the approach to the violence phenomenon within this society, in its contemporary stage. The contributions encompass conceptual and theoretical discussions that amplify our explanatory horizon; explore the complex relations between poverty, social inequality, citizenship and violence; deal with the theoretical traditions in the social sciences, trying to bring them to the field of collective health; approach phenomena that have not received much attention – like violence in sports – together with others that, although more frequently studied by researchers, still deserve greater investments in terms of scientific investigation, such as violence in generational, domestic and gender relations, also from the angle of human rights. The highlights are the studies that deal with violence in institutional relations, more specifically among those in charge of providing assistance and protection for the victims of violence, in the perspective of humanization.

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